

a Surgeon General. Can you address those criticisms and also the other criticism that there doesn't even need to be a Surgeon General?

The President. Well, first of all, I—we had this ready to go. We thought the appropriate thing to do was to wait until right after the break instead of doing it right before the break. So we've been ready for some time. But I thought to do it after the August recess would give it greater national visibility and greater impetus going into the congressional hearing process.

And secondly, you could make an argument that we don't need a lot of folks, I guess, but my view is that the country is better off with a Surgeon General than without one. And I think of the contributions that Dr. Koop has made. I think of contributions many of our other Surgeons General have made. I think the idea of having a person who can be looked to by

ordinary Americans for good advice and for strong advocacy on what they can personally do, on what the public policy of the country ought to be, and who can advise us about what we should be doing in policy and research and things of that kind, is very, very important.

I think the country kind of likes the idea that there ought to be a doctor that they can trust, that they can turn to for old homespun advice and for also keeping them on the cutting edge of whatever modern medical developments are. And I know that I certainly feel that way, and I'll feel a lot better when Dr. Satcher has been confirmed.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:30 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop.

The President's Radio Address *September 13, 1997*

Good morning. America has had a summer of significant achievement, as we are working to protect our values and prepare our people for the 21st century. The balanced budget shows what we can do when we put aside partisanship and work for the public interest and our children's future. But America can't rest. One of the most important things we can do in the next phase of our progress is to pass long-overdue campaign finance reform.

Since I became President, I've worked hard to reform the political system to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. I've acted within my executive authority to limit the ability of important executive branch appointees to work for foreign governments when they leave office. I've worked with Congress to reduce the size of Government to its lowest level since President Kennedy was here and to pass sweeping lobby reform, limiting gifts from lobbyists to lawmakers. We've also gotten the line item veto so the President can cancel wasteful spending, but we haven't succeeded in reforming the campaign finance laws, though we've been trying for nearly 5 years.

The campaign finance system we have now, which is over 20 years old, has simply been overwhelmed by the rising cost of campaigns, largely advertising and other communication costs, and the flood of campaign cash required to meet those costs. The amount of money raised by both political parties now doubles every 4 years. And the candidates themselves are caught up in a fundraising arms race, spending more and more time raising more and more money, which is bound to raise more questions in the public's mind. The campaign system is broken, and every one of us must take responsibility for fixing it.

I'm doing what I can within the executive branch. I've asked our Federal Communications Commission to require media outlets to provide candidates with free air time, especially TV air time, which will reduce the need for more campaign money. I've also asked the Federal Election Commission to ban the large soft-money contributions to political parties from corporations, unions, and wealthy individuals. And the Justice Department has indicated it will go to court, when appropriate, to defend the constitutionality of limited campaign spending.

But there is no substitute for strong, bipartisan campaign finance reform legislation passed by the Congress. I proposed such reform when I ran for President, and I have backed reform legislation every year since then. And in every single year, reform has been blocked in the Congress by a filibuster in the United States Senate, a procedure by which only 41 of the 100 Senators can stop a bill from coming to a vote. Now the special interests and their allies in Congress are poised to strike again, waiting to quietly smother reform with another filibuster. But this year they won't get away with it, at least quietly, because Senators John McCain, a Republican, and Russ Feingold, a Democrat, have pledged to bring their reform legislation to a vote in the Senate this month, and all America will be watching.

On Thursday all 45 Democratic Senators—every single Democrat in the Senate—wrote to the Senate leadership in support. I'm very proud of them. I'm also proud that citizens' groups, spurred by business executives and civic leaders, have gathered one million signatures on a petition to Congress advocating campaign finance reform. I'm grateful to Presidents Ford and Carter and Bush, all of whom have called for reform. They are being joined by dozens of

former lawmakers. And the American public clearly wants action.

This is a time of testing for Members of the United States Senate. The opponents of reform are gearing up to keep it from coming to a vote at all. Let's be clear: A vote to filibuster campaign reform is a vote to keep special interest money and kill reform; a vote to filibuster is a vote for the status quo. A Senator who votes "yes" on a filibuster is voting "yes" to soft money and "yes" to keep the cost of campaigns exploding and "no" on reform. That vote will be hard to explain to the American people.

This year, despite all the odds, we've got the best chance in a generation for reform. Throughout our history, the American people have overcome the resistance of entrenched interests to expand our democracy and to keep it strong in changing times. Let's make this autumn a season of reform in our campaign finance laws.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 6:36 p.m. on September 12 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 13.

Remarks at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Gala September 13, 1997

Thank you. Thank you very much. Congresswoman Waters, every time you get up to speak I'm always all ears. When you introduce me, I'm certainly all ears. I'm never quite sure what you're going to say—[laughter]—but I'm absolutely sure you will say what you think. Maxine Waters is my kind of public official. I've been to her district several times with her. She knows the people in the street, the people on the corners. She cares about the people that other people forget. Her district is the first one where I met young men who had been in gangs who were walking the streets with her to save the lives of other young people. That's the kind of thing she's done, and America owes Maxine Waters a debt of gratitude, and I thank her.

I want to congratulate Congressman Clyburn and LeBaron Taylor and all of you who are

responsible for this event tonight. I was glad to be here, too, with Congressman Gephardt and with all the distinguished members of the audience. I see Kweisi Mfume there and Mrs. King and Mayor Barry, Dr. Height. Reverend Jackson, I'm always glad to see you. And I think I speak for many of us here when we say that you and your family and your mother are in our prayers, sir. God bless you. And thank you for the magnificent job you did leading, along with Secretary Slater, the American delegation to the African economic summit in Zimbabwe.

Let me also congratulate the award winners: Major Owens and Eva Clayton, Bill Lucy and Danny Bakewell, Laura Murphy and William Brooks, Myrlie Evers-Williams, Coretta Scott King, the late Dr. Betty Shabazz, and my good